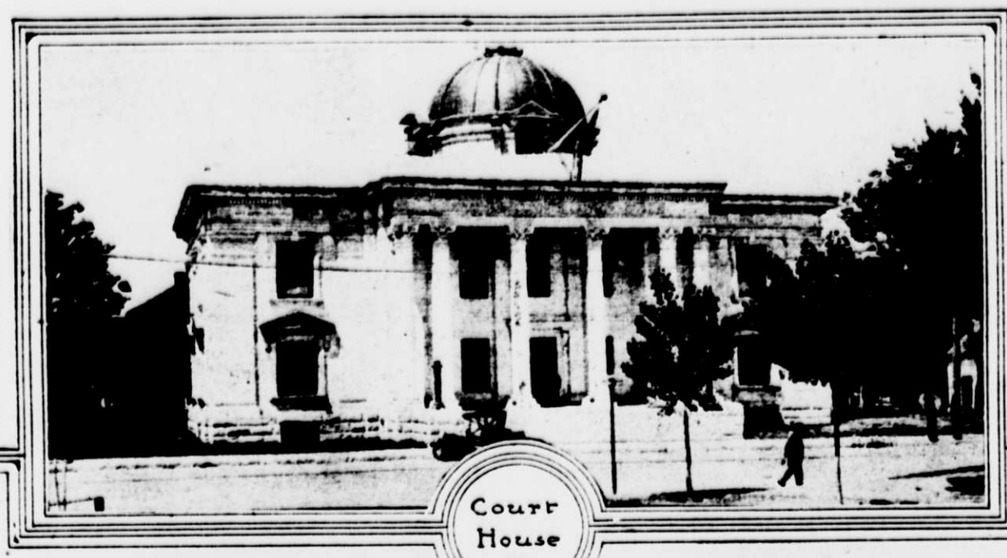
NEW DIVORCE LAW SEVERER



Court House

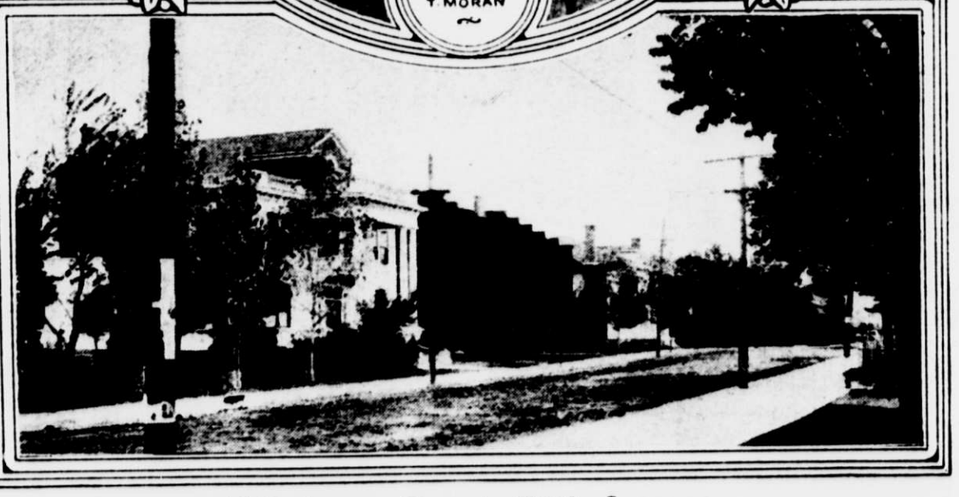
Houses Which are Rented Furnished

The Colonial Apartments

GENERAL VIEW OF RENO

SIERRA NEVADA MOUNTAINS IN DISTANCE

JUDGE THOS. T. MORAN



Mill Street Reno's Fifth Avenue.

The familiar pleasantries which have made Reno, Nev., synonymous with easy divorce are likely to see much of their end soon. According to a recent announcement the Nevada divorce law is to be amended and thereafter the bit will be placed tightly on the famous colony of divorce seekers.

Through the existence of the divorce colony, it appears, Nevada has been seriously injured in a business way, and numbers of prospective settlers, hearing of the supposed doings on at Reno, have been led to believe that they were typical of the social life of the state as a whole, and have consequently gone elsewhere. At the present time Nevada is making efforts to increase its population and has many inducements to offer. Not only are the State's mineral resources only partly developed but through the completion of an extensive irrigation system enormous areas of former desert land have been made fertile.

Furthermore, Nevada is surpassed in climate by few other States, its summers being free from excessive heat, while the winters are bracing and delightful. In spite of these attractions, however, the Reno divorce colony is better known than the other features of Nevada, and so the stream of Western homeseekers has been diverted to other States.

It is for this reason that the people of Nevada have determined to put some restrictions on the colony by means of an amendment to the divorce law increasing the legal term of residence for divorce seekers from six months to one year. This amendment, it is understood, will be adopted by the Legislature at its approaching session. A further amendment likely to be made will provide that no divorce decree shall be effective until one year has lapsed from the date of issuance. This plan, it is believed, would prevent the immediate remarriages which so often follow Reno divorces and have been the cause of much scandal.

Strange as it may seem, comparatively few natives of Nevada get divorced, most of the people who take advantage of the liberal divorce law having come from other States. A majority of these make their residence in Reno because it is the largest and pleasantest town in Nevada. It is an attractive little city—a town of red brick so far as its business district is concerned. The principal streets are asphalted, the sidewalk well paved and the whole place looks unusually well kept. The residential districts compare favorably with those of much larger cities.

As is well known people of some distinction in literary, musical, theatrical and artistic circles, as well as a certain proportion of what is termed "the sporting set," have been much in evidence in the divorce colony. In a comparatively small town—for Reno's population is scarcely 12,000—the livelier members of the colony are naturally more noticeable than they would be in a larger city. Stories of their doings have been circulated far and wide, and it is on this account that Reno in recent years has become notorious. Colonists of the lively type usually gather at such resorts as the Colony Cafe, the Delmonico's of Reno, which has been the scene of divorce dinners and the other revels of which so much is heard.

Having ample funds, they may be seen dining any evening in what is popularly known as the "romance room." They have filled the streets of Reno with automobiles and have taken a foremost part in the local good roads movement. They do much toward supporting the various places of amusement and have proved such a bonanza to the Reno storekeepers that it is not surprising the business people are protesting against the proposed change in the divorce law.

While it is difficult to estimate the extent of the colony, it is generally believed that between five hundred and a thousand persons visit Reno every year in quest of divorce. A large proportion of these come from New York, and for this preponderance of New Yorkers various explanations are given; probably the most important reason is the severity of the New York divorce law.

Women are in the majority, and most of them live quietly enough during their six months term of residence. Many have children with them and superintend their education; others take up special courses of study and engage in church work. Most of the women to be seen exchanging books in the Rule Carnegie Library are members of the colony, and according to the librarian problem novels and the works of Ibsen, Ellen Key and Bernard Shaw are in much demand.

The men who go to Reno usually find work of some kind to relieve the monotony of existence; some invest money in mining ventures and others take a hand at farming. There are, however, plenty of poor people who seek divorce and are glad to turn their hands to work of any kind. Some men who would have scorned to do manual labor at home find themselves roughing it in true Western fashion. A bookkeeper from Brooklyn, for instance, found employment as porter in one of the hotels and the driver of a milk wagon had once been a floorwalker in a New York department store.

The women who work their way to freedom are even more numerous. They are to be found behind the counters in the stores, they tap typewriters, they keep books, they teach music, painting and dancing, they cook, act as nurses and waitresses and even scrub floors with the sole object of obtaining release from marriage ties that have become intolerable.

The cost of a Reno divorce ranges from fifty to fifteen hundred dollars, the latter sum being supposed to cover moderate living expenses for six months, travelling expenses and legal fees. The minimum amount represents the usual fee paid by the poor divorce seekers, who work while awaiting their decrees.

In spite of a very general impression, the Reno colonists do not herd together, but are scattered all over the town. In one of the best residential streets is a luxurious apartment house, the Colonial—appropriately named—where most of the tenants are divorce seekers of ample means, and so great is the demand for rooms in this establishment that there is always a waiting list. Divorce colonists domestically inclined can rent cosey little houses completely furnished for housekeeping for $45 a month. Others live in apartments, boarding houses or furnished rooms.

Many colonists find quarters at the Riverside Hotel, overlooking the picturesque Truckee River—a famous trout stream, which rushes down from the snow capped Sierras. From the bridge which spans the river one may catch a basketful of trout any afternoon during the fishing season. Opposite the hotel is the little public library, and conveniently near is the new court house, a handsome structure of marble and white stone surmounted by a burnished copper dome. Here the divorce cases are tried on divorce days, when the seats in the courtroom are usually packed with spectators. Across the river is the post office, always thronged with colonists when the mails arrive.

RENO COLONY THREATENED

In European cities tourists visit picture galleries, museums and palaces; in Reno the visitor's attention is called to houses associated with famous divorce cases. Near the river one can see the house where Mrs. Corey lived while getting her divorce from the steel magnate, and in Mill street, Reno's Fifth avenue, there is a dwelling once occupied by Virginia Harned, whom a Reno decree parted from E. H. Sothern.

Reno has also its romantic side. Skirting the Truckee River is a narrow path popularly known as "Affinity lane," a picturesque walk much frequented by colonists. It is said that many a chance meeting in the lane has led to a remarriage following a divorce; hence the name.

Such is the life of the Reno divorce colonists and the question may naturally be asked: Why should Nevada have attained such distinction as a divorce centre? For this there are several reasons.

In the first place, contrary to a widespread belief, the Nevada divorce law was not enacted in recent years for the purpose of attracting divorce colonists. It was adopted in fact in 1861. In that year, when Nevada was organized as a Territory, Congress gave approval to the statutes of Nevada which contained the present divorce law. In order to encourage settlement Nevada permitted citizenship to be acquired in six months and at the end of that term any newcomer could establish residence and bring a legal action, such as a suit for divorce.

In the statute of divorce, in addition to the usual ground of divorce, other causes were named, including desertion or non-support for one year, conviction of a felony or infamous crime, habitual drunkenness and extreme cruelty. The law furthermore declared that a defendant who was not in Nevada could be served with a summons and complaint, and according to legal interpretation this has been supposed to mean that papers can be served by mail or by a notice inserted in a newspaper. The latter provision, it may be added, is unique among the divorce laws of the United States. The facts that a residence of only six months in the State confers the right to sue for divorce and that a defendant outside the State can be served with papers explain why divorce seekers flock to Nevada.

Reno first became famous in 1900, when Earl Russell, an English peer, obtained a Nevada divorce. Having married Miss Marion Cook, the earl returned with his bride to England, where his first wife was living. He was arrested for bigamy and tried before the House of Lords, where his Nevada decree was pronounced invalid and he was sentenced to three months imprisonment as a first class offender. His first wife died afterward and he again married Miss Cook.

In discussing the case at the time newspapers called attention to the ease with which divorce could be obtained in Nevada, a fact which impressed a New York divorce lawyer. Hurrying to Reno he opened an office, advertised extensively and soon caused an influx of divorce seekers from all parts of the country. In this way the divorce colony started in Reno.

Should the Nevada Legislature increase the legal term of residence to one year this change will not make much difference to divorce seekers who have ample means. Few people anxious for freedom would object to remaining in Reno an additional six months. Nor would restrictions on remarriages have much effect, for a divorcee could easily evade this provision by getting married in another State.

The increased term of residence would be felt more severely by the poor divorce seekers, who would either have to find employment for a year or be debarred from the benefits of the Nevada law. In fact if it were not for the provision which enables a defendant outside Nevada to be served with papers most people who visit the Sage-brush State to obtain divorce would probably go elsewhere. The Washington divorce law, for instance, is even more liberal than that of Nevada and the Nevada grounds for divorce are actually less in number than those of several older States, such as New Hampshire or Tennessee.

South Dakota was once in Nevada's position, but the people of that State when the question was referred to them increased the legal term of residence from six months to one year. This amendment was adopted solely for business reasons and not on any moral grounds, the notoriety attained by Sioux City as a divorce centre having injured the reputation of the entire State.

Among the distinguished people who have visited Reno is ex-President Roosevelt, who was a guest of the city in June, 1911. On this occasion Mr. Roosevelt did not hesitate to deal strenuously with the divorce question. In a speech to the people of Reno he said:

"I congratulate you on having abolished public gambling; and now I wish you success in your efforts to discourage the divorce evil. I don't assume to say what you should do with your own people who seek divorce, but keep out the colonists. You can't afford to make money in that way. In preventing the coming of people from other States to obtain divorces here I say more elbow to you."

Other students of the divorce question take an entirely different view of the situation. Profs. Howard, Wilcox, Patten and Lichtenberger have asserted that society is now undergoing a process of reconstruction as the result of social progress. This is having a profound effect on the marriage relation.

The Nevada view of divorce has been expressed by Judge Moran of the Superior Court at Reno.

"The Nevada divorce law," he says, "is a good law from the moral and legal points of view, and its provisions are in accordance with common sense. No good can possibly come from coercing the unhappily married to live together, and judicial separations are unsatisfactory. In my opinion, if even one party to a marriage is made wretched by that union the marriage should be dissolved."

In the meantime the courts of certain States, and more especially those of New York, have refused to recognize Nevada divorces in certain cases, so that some men and women who have obtained divorce in Reno find themselves regarded as bigamists elsewhere and subject to prosecution.

LONDON BOBBIES AND TOASTED SCONES ARE BOTH PRONOUNCED BRITISH INSTITUTIONS

"I SAY, officer, can you direct us to a cafe or something of the sort? My—er—wife wants a drink."

The bobby smiled a wide, wide smile, and then he snorted. His two American inquisitors giggled. They were again in a land where a sense of humor is important. Residence in Paris is likely to cloud one's appreciation of the value of a giggle in the proper place.

What the foreigner is to a Paris cab driver, as he repeats the address half a dozen times in "perfect" French, the American is to the London policeman. He affords a gleam of bliss in an uneventful life. Everything in London is so well behaved, everybody is so anxious to help somebody else, everything runs so like clockwork that if it were not for his capacity of fount of endless information the bobby would be desolate. He is supposed to know everything, and the quest of the American tourist for knowledge brings him his most human touches. The same tourist who wanted a drink on that chilly day inquired soon afterward for a bus to the Wallace Museum. The Kentish giant to whom he appealed promptly said he did not know where that was.

"I'll tell you," said Mr. Tourist, and whipped out his Baedecker, red back and all, and calmly looked up the famous picture gallery in the index, while the policeman smiled grimly down on top of his questioner's hat.

They like it, those famous bobbies, and if they smile it's not bad manners, but pure enjoyment. They even like to be asked to tell the best shows at the theatres, and there is nothing more enjoyable to a Cockney constable than an American who cannot understand him. For the Cockney regards himself as the only true Londoner and his language as the only correct pronunciation of the mother tongue.

Your pilgrim from Paris to London is likely to carry with him the joyous confidence that he is going to get a touch of home. He silently thinks of roast turkey and cranberry sauce, and perhaps of talking French to the waiters (by mistake, you know) and anticipates the pleasure it will be to pay six cents for a copy of the *Times* at Folkestone dock. And he smiles indulgently when his French friends say enviously:

"You'll enjoy London. You speak the language so well."

Yet the first few days in London are likely to impress upon the Paris pilgrim the fact that there is probably more in common between Paris and New York than between London and the beloved American metropolis. Paris gives one the sense of being still busy manufacturing herself out of her clay. London is all finished, baked, built and weatherbeaten. There is nothing left to be done.

It is so immense that you never get anywhere. You start going and keep on going, and when you get through you are in some place that looks just like the place you started from.

The American who approaches England for the first time is pretty likely to carry a willingness to find it the most wonderful country in the world, and a readiness to bow before it. In France he is conscious of his superiority in thousands of things, the very things England has given him, and which he has been taught to be proud of. But when he plans going to England, he expects to be overwhelmed by the perfection of just those things.

WITHOUT "TOASTED SCONES" ENGLISH "TEA" WOULD DISAPPEAR.

And he would be, if that were all he had. England, barring her heating systems, knows more about comfort and adapting things to her own use than any other country in the world.

They call Paris a country town, but there is nothing simpler or kindlier in Paris than the London driver of cab or bus, or the London omnibus conductor. No New Yorker ever saw such manners outside the country town he was born in, where the driver of the horse car was always willing to wait while Mrs. Brown did her shopping, so as to take her directly home, where she could finish May's dress for the party. If you want to change omnibuses in London you can have the one to which you transfer wait for you by calling to the conductor. If you see your bus at the corner half a block away, you can signal the conductor and he will wait. They will stop anywhere but the middle of the street, and they never short change you or give you bad money.

To him who knows the Continent, and especially Paris, all these things pass ordinary understanding. The Paris omnibuses stop only at far removed stations, they will never wait for you, your change must always be inspected, and the drivers of vehicles on the Paris streets go at a breakneck speed that puts their machines utterly beyond their control, and they seem to prefer running over you to getting you for a fare. But most of all is the honesty of Britain shown in the handling of the barbaric currency. And despite all this, the English clerk seldom if ever cheats you, and he scorns to offer you bad money, or give you florins for half crowns. The only sign of lack of welcome in stolid Britain is the skilful plying of the trade of pocket picking.

The only sign? No, no, no! London fresh air and London cold explain to complete physical dissatisfaction all the traditions extant regarding a national coolness of temperament. One has but to visit London in November to understand, and to shiver.

Paris is antiquated enough in her heating arrangements, but she will allow you to warm up your establishment with stoves, and her coal will burn. But London has neither stoves nor furnaces, and her open grates, though extremely decorative, give off calories with miserly care. To reside in London one must acquire either those seven suits of underwear or the physical attainments of the lowly Fuegians, with blood that cannot grow cold because it is already frozen, or else—there is a ray of hope—one may drink things.

The Englishman's appetite for good things to eat and drink is perhaps the answer after all. Roast beef and hot tea and whiskey will give you a very good imitation of a warm room for a time, and the English meals follow each other with such rapidity that if you follow the proper British schedule you cannot actually freeze to death.

London tea rooms are of course not really warm, for no place in the world is that, but the tea room is a refuge at least, and there are those warm things to drink and to eat. There was a kind providence in the provision of tea for the British—of tea and toasted scones. Those toasted scones of London! No French pastry cook ever approach that dish, that wonderful dish, in satisfaction for the human stomach. Without toasted scones the practice of taking tea in London would undoubtedly fall into disuse, and all the Londoners would freeze to death.

From the English bobby to the toasted scones of London may perhaps be a far cry. But they both shout forth the genius of Britain, her only genius, comfort. Tempered by tradition the comfort is, but it has made Britain great, and it makes those who, after the pilgrimage to the island in the "stormy northern sea" forgive its many insular defects. To make a bobby smile and to have a toasted scone for tea should well satisfy the most exacting traveller.